

What is claimed is:

1. A method for providing collaborative browsing of a communications network that allows multiple users, each with a browser for browsing the network, jointly and generally simultaneously to access objects within the network, the method comprising:

- associating a browser companion with each of multiple users' respective browsers;
- generating multiple categories of information related to the object accessed via a first user's browser; and
- displaying the related information to (1) the first user and (2) the other of the multiple users via their respective browsers or associated browser companions.

2. A method according to claim 1 in which the multiple categories of information comprise a category selected from the group consisting of one or more: (a) links by which the user can access via the browser or browser companion other information within the network related to the object; (b) communities; and (c) products.

3. A method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of managing the first user's administrative rights to control or participate in a collaborative browsing session of the Internet with other of the multiple users.

4. A method according to claim 3 in which the managing step comprises providing the browser companion with an applet adapted to communicate with a first server that manages the collaborative browsing session.

5. A method according to claim 3 in which the first server is adapted to update the browser companions of users participating in the collaborative browsing session with information concerning the designated leader, participants, invited users, kicked users, super users, or creators of the collaborative browsing session.

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6. A method according to claim 1 in which the generating step comprises:

- forwarding to a Web server a descriptor of the object or action taken by the user to access the object; and
- comparing the descriptor with a database storing (a) a plurality of different descriptors and (b) the information related to each such descriptor.

7. A system for allowing multiple users generally simultaneously to access objects hosted by a remote server over a network, the system comprising:

- an interface for coupling with a first browser, wherein the interface and first browser are loaded on a computer or microprocessor that is coupled to the network;
- a server that (1) receives from the interface the address of a first portion of the computer network the first browser accesses and (2) communicates information to the interface;
- a display for showing information received at the interface, wherein the information comprises data associated with the first portion of the computer network; and
- a user interface for allowing a first user to enter commands for transmission to the server, wherein at least one of the commands comprises a command to initiate a session in which the interface causes at least a second browser to display to a second user information associated with the first user's actions.

8. A system according to claim 7 further comprising a session server adapted to manage a collaborative browsing session between at least the first and second users.

9. A system according to claim 8 in which the session server tracks the administrative privileged of the users participating in the collaborative browsing session.

10. A system for improving a user or group of user's Internet surfing experience comprising:

- a computer, associated with at least one of the users and having a first browser for viewing the world wide Web;
- a second browser coupled to the computer and adapted to communicate with a computer network comprising at least one server that supports the second browser, whereby the second browser is adapted to provide the server with tracking information concerning the object being displayed by the first browser; and
- wherein the server, upon receipt of the tracking information, generates a list of related information for delivery to the first or second browser for display to the user.

11. A system according to claim 10 in which the tracking information comprises the user's URL and the server accesses a database of URLs or indicia representing URLs in order to draw from the database information the list.

12. A system according to claim 10 in which the second browser is adapted to allow users to post information to a Web page being viewed by a particular user.

13. A browser companion for use in accessing the Web or another computer network, the browser companion comprising:

- a display for showing multiple categories of information related to an object accessed by a user of the browser companion;
- a first applet for interfacing with a first server in order to retrieve the categories of related information, wherein the first applet provides the first server with updates concerning the user's present location or actions ;
- a second applet for providing to a second server in order to allow the user to browse the Web collaboratively with other users.

14. A method for allowing a group of users interactively to tour a computer network, the method comprising:

- allocating leadership of a touring session to a first group member, whereby the first group member can select other objects within the computer network for display to the group;
- assigning each group member a predefined set of administrative rights that govern the group member's participation in the touring session; and
- reallocating leadership upon receipt of a request from a second group member.

15. A method according to claim 14 in which at least one of the group members is assigned at least one of the following rights: the right to kick other group members from the touring session, the right automatically to take control of the touring session, and the right to terminate the session.

16. A method according to claim 13 further comprising the steps of (a) limiting the touring session to a Web site located within the computer network and (b) displaying information related to the Web site.

17. A method according to claim 13 further comprising the step of allowing at least one of the user's to attaching a note to a Web site and optionally to designate the note for sharing among other users.

18. A method for associating information with each Web site within a group of Web sites without requiring permission of a Web site operator, the method comprising:

- aggregating at least two different Web sites to create a neighborhood;
- associating shared information with either (1) the neighborhood or (2) each entry therein; and

- accessing a Web server via a browser in order to retrieve the shared information when a user accesses the neighborhood or any entry therein.

19. A method according to claim 18 in which the neighborhood further comprises an object from the group consisting of a bulletin board, a collaborative browsing session, a chat session, a discussion group, and an event broadcast over the Internet.

20. A method according to claim 18 in which the shared information comprises data selected from the group consisting of notes added by a user, collaborative browsing sessions related to the neighborhood or entries therein, chat sessions related to the neighborhood or entries therein, discussion groups related to the neighborhood or entries therein, and a communication link related to the neighborhood or any entry therein.

21. A method according to claim 18 further comprising a step of authenticating the identity of the browser in order to determine whether the shared information may be retrieved by the browser.

22. A method for allowing visitors to a particular Web site to initiate a collaborative browsing session, the method comprising:

- authenticating each session participant to confirm that each has a browser adapted to communicate with a server that supports a collaborative browsing ("CB") session;
- designating at least one administrator or at least one of the authenticated session participants to be the leader of a CB session; and
- analyzing each of the leader's site changes to confirm that the CB session is operating within selected parameters.

23. A method according to claim 22 further comprising the step of at least temporarily provisioning any non-authenticated user with an applet for communicating with the server and, thereafter, authenticating that user.

24. A method for enhancing Internet surfing to provide users additional content, collaboration and context, the method comprising:

- associating information with particular sites via a database that indicia describing a Web site with information related to the Web site;
- providing each of a group of users with a browser companion;
- assigning each user within the group of users a set of privileges controlling each users participation within a collaborative Internet touring session;
- configuring each browser companion to:
 1. communicate to a first server a particular user's present URL;
 2. receive from a second server information concerning at least some of the administrative privileges assigned to each; and
 3. display to a user information related to the present URL.

25. A method according to claim 24 further comprising the initiating a collaborative browsing session limited to a particular site or group of sites.

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